IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Cancelled) A method of controlling congestion in a network having a plurality of switching points, comprising:

receiving a message from a first switching point at a second switching point to indicate that traffic between a source and a destination is congested; and

reducing a data rate at which packets destined for the destination are output from the second switching point in response to receiving the message.

2. (Previously Cancelled) The method of claim 1, wherein each switching point manages a plurality of service level agreements (SLA) such that data packets corresponding to each service level agreement (SLA) are transmitted from each switching point at at least a minimum data rate corresponding to said respective SLA, and further including:

transmitting by said second switching point data packets for an SLA at a data rate greater than said minimum data rate resulting in congestion at said first switching point;

wherein said step of reducing includes, reducing said data rate for said SLA but not adjusting the data rate for other SLAs managed by said second switching point.

3. (Previously Cancelled) The method of claim 2, wherein said step of reducing said data rate includes reducing said data rate to said minimum data rate.

4. (Previously Cancelled) The method of claim 2, wherein said step of reducing said data rate includes reducing said data rate to zero.

5. (Previously Amended) A method for controlling congestion in a network having a plurality of switching points, comprising:

maintaining a plurality of service level agreements (SLAs) at a first switching point, each SLA having a corresponding minimum data rate;

transmitting data packets corresponding to each SLA at or above the minimum data rate in accordance with the respective SLA;

receiving a message from a second switching point at the first switching point to indicate that traffic between a source and a destination is congested; and

adjusting a data rate at which packets corresponding to an SLA, destined for the destination, are output from the first switching point in response to receiving the message to reduce the congestion.

6. (Previously Added) The method of claim 5 wherein adjusting the data rate for packets corresponding to the SLA to reduce the congestion includes reducing the data rate to the minimum data rate for the SLA.

7. (Previously Added) The method of claim 5 wherein adjusting the data rate for packets corresponding to the SLA to reduce the congestion includes reducing the data rate below the minimum data rate.

8. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 5 wherein maintaining SLAs further comprises separating the data packets into different queues corresponding to each different SLA.

9. (Previously Cancelled) An article of manufacture comprising a machine-accessible medium that includes content that when accessed provides instructions to cause a machine to:

receive a message from a first switching point at a second switching point to indicate that traffic between a source and a destination is congested; and

reduce a data rate at which packets destined for the destination are output from the second switching point in response to receiving the message.

10. (Previously Amended) An article of manufacture comprising a machine-accessible medium that includes content that when accessed provides instructions to cause a machine to:

maintain a plurality of service level agreements (SLAs) at a first switching point, each SLA having a corresponding minimum data rate;

transmit data packets corresponding to each SLA at or above the minimum data rate in accordance with the respective SLA;

receive a message from a second switching point to indicate that traffic between a source and a destination is congested; and

adjust a data rate at which packets corresponding to an SLA, destined for the destination, are transmitted in response to receiving the message to reduce the congestion.

11. (Previously Added) The article of manufacture of claim 10 wherein the content to provide instructions to cause the machine to adjust the data rate for an SLA to reduce the congestion includes the content providing instructions to cause the machine to reduce the data rate to the minimum data rate for the SLA.

12. (Previously Added) The article of manufacture of claim 10 wherein the content to provide instructions to cause the machine to adjust the data rate for an SLA to reduce the congestion includes the content providing instructions to cause the machine to reduce the data rate below the minimum data rate for the SLA.

13. (Previously Amended) The article of manufacture of claim 10 wherein the content to provide instructions to cause the machine to maintain SLAs further comprises the content providing instructions to cause the machine to separate the data packets into different queues corresponding to each different SLA.

14. (Previously Added) A method of controlling congestion among a plurality of switching points, comprising:

managing a plurality of service level agreements (SLAs) specifying a minimum data rate of transmission for packets corresponding to each SLA, at each switching point;

sending a message from a downstream switching point to an upstream switching point to cause the upstream switching point to reduce a data rate at which packets associated with a specific SLA are output from the upstream switching point to a device downstream from the downstream switching point; and

sending a message from the downstream switching point to the upstream switching point to cause the upstream switching point to increase the data rate at which packets associated with the specific SLA are output from the upstream switching point to the device downstream from the downstream switching point.

15. (Previously Cancelled) A system comprising:

a first switching device to send a message to indicate that traffic between a source and a destination is congested; and

a second switching device coupled with the first switching device to receive the message, and reduce a data rate at which packets destined for the destination are output from the second switching device in response to the message.

16. (Previously Amended) A system comprising:

a first switching point to manage service level agreements (SLAs) specifying a minimum data rate for packets corresponding to the SLA, and send a message to indicate that traffic between a source and a destination is congested; and

a second switching point coupled with the first switching point to manage SLAs specifying a minimum data rate for packets corresponding to the SLA, transmit packets from the second switching point in accordance with the SLA, receive the message from the first switching point, and reduce a data rate at which packets corresponding to an SLA indicated in the message, destined for the destination, are output from the second switching device in response to receiving the message.

17. (Previously Added) The system of claim 16 wherein the second switching point reducing the data rate includes the second switching point to reduce the data rate to the minimum data rate specified by the corresponding SLA.

18. (Previously Added) The system of claim 16 wherein the second switching point reducing the data rate includes the second switching point to reduce the data rate to below the minimum data rate specified by the corresponding SLA.